

THE BEE GEES. Ah! how the mind slips back. Memories of mini skirted teenyboppers running through flowery glades and the sound of the Bee Gees, high on their Cucumber Castle, gentle wafting through the evening shadows.

The Bee Gees today of course are a completely different proposition. They've changed mentally, physically and financially and they've expanded their personal appearances to all parts of the globe — except Britain where we have not had the opportunity of seeing the Bee Gees live for almost three years.

They did one show at the Festival Hall earlier this year but that can by no means be described as a major tour.

For make no mistake about it, the Bee Gees have not slipped in terms of crowd drawing and crowd pleasing potential. But why so few gigs?

"Basically its down to finance," said Barry, clutching a coke and plonking himself on the sofa between Maurice and Robin.

"Most people in England have no conception at all of how expensive it is for a band to tour here. If the whole thing is going to be done properly there's hardly any way that the group can make money. By the time you've paid for the expenses, the promoter and the other 'inbetweeners' you're left with almost nothing.

'We just want to write songs' — Bee Gees

People hear that a band is getting 'X' amount of pounds for a gig and think 'Why the heck should I pay so much to go and see them when they're getting that much money.' The problem is that the group themselves are receiving nowhere near that amount.

"In the States the whole financial end of affairs is far more worth while. Your salary is higher because the cost of living is higher. They charge more for the kids to get into the concerts but then again, the kids earn a lot more money themselves — so its fair. In England you have the situation where the kids are charged too much to get into the gig in the first place and yet the group often seem to end up losing as well.

"Any way, the point is that we're really looking forward to doing this tour because . . . well — its been so long since we've played our own country. It's a challenge because we've been out of touch for so long — not mentally but

physically. Hopefully we'll now be able to spend a bit more time here."

Mind you, the group have still had reasonable chart success. Both Run To Me and My World featured strongly in the charts and their current album Life In A Tin Can is still selling steadily.

But back to the Festival Hall concert. What have they been up to since then?

"Well we did a five-week tour of the States which was really successful. We employed a different formula on this tour because instead of using one orchestra for the whole of the tour we used the resident symphony orchestras from each town we played," said Maurice.

The subject of 'screamers' comes up. Odd reports that filtered back to England suggested that some of their concerts had been virtually overrun by 'bopper' hysteria. True?

"Sometimes," admitted Maurice. "We seemed to get a mixture. When we were playing with the New

York Philharmonic there were some people there with bow ties and dinner jackets and others in jeans. There were also a few screamers which didn't please the dinner jacket brigade. That's the problem you see, if you get half the audience who want to sit down and listen and the other half who want to scream and leap about you're in trouble. The screamers then spoil it for the listeners and it makes it difficult for us on stage as well."

The tour was sold out from start to finish which perhaps should serve as some indication to the doubters in England that the group, far from slipping in popularity, are gaining new fans from both ends of the age bracket.

What the Bees Gees like to be respected for is their songwriting — and they've got every right to be. The list of name artists who've recorded their songs just goes on and on: Nina Simone, Elvis Presley, Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, Englebert Humperdink, Tom Jones, Bing Crosby, Janis Joplin . . . It's an impressive list and that's only part of it. Massachusetts, Words and To Love Somebody all had over 250 cover versions and How Can You Mend A Broken Heart and Run To Me were the most recorded songs for Warner Brothers in 1972. That folks, is no mean achievement!

Maurice, for instance, jokes that he still hasn't washed his hand after

meeting Sinatra in Las Vegas!

"I went there with Lulu when she was working at the Riviera Hotel. We arrived to find a note from Tom Jones asking us to join him for a drink across the road. Well we sat down at the table and I suddenly realised that the chap sitting next to me with the gorgeous Chinese girl was none other than Frank Sinatra.

"Tom introduced us and we sat up chatting till about five in the morning. Eventually he recorded First Of May and Words. I haven't heard either of them yet though."

How did they feel about certain comments made in the British press just before their Festival Hall concert that they'd slipped in popularity?

"We just don't listen to those sort of things," declared Robin.

"Things have never been better. Besides I think we proved them wrong at the Festival Hall. The show was sold out and everyone thoroughly enjoyed themselves. Three years ago the critics said the same thing and we proved them wrong with more records.

"Eventually we'll do it again with more songs because that's what we are if you come right down to it — songwriters.

Mike Beatty

